

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-30 (canceled).

31. (new) A specimen container comprising:
a body having an opening for placement of a specimen;
a lid to cover the opening of the body; and
a substantially continuous indicator band extending around the body; the band being located on the body adjacent the opening and viewable when the lid is placed over the opening, wherein the indicator band is incorporated on the body of the container prior to a specimen being located within the body of the container.

32. (new) The specimen container of claim 31 wherein the indicator band is a label that is applied to the body.

33. (new) The specimen container of claim 31 wherein the indicator band is integrally formed with the body.

34. (new) The specimen container of claim 31 wherein the indicator band is printed on the body.

35. (new) The specimen container of claim 31 wherein the indicator band includes a human and/or machine readable element.

36. (new) The specimen container of claim 31 wherein the indicator band includes a removable tag.

37. (new) The specimen container of claim 36 wherein the removable tag is an adhesive tag.

38. (new) A method of color coding a specimen container, the method comprising the steps of:

incorporating a colored indicator band extending around a body of a specimen container adjacent an opening of the body so that when a lid is placed over the opening, the indicator band is viewable,

wherein the indicator band is incorporated on a body of the specimen container prior to a sample being located within the body of the container.

39. (new) The method of claim 38 further including the step of the indicator band being incorporated around the body of the container during production of the container.

40. (new) The method of claim 38 further including the step of adhering the indicator band to the container.

41. (new) The method of claim 38 further including the step of integrally forming the indicator band with the container.

42. (new) The method of claim 38 further including the step of printing the indicator band on the container.

43. (new) A method of operating a medical clinic, including:

receiving or preparing unused specimen containers having priority indicators on the bodies of the containers,

receiving or preparing unused specimen containers without priority indicators,

determining whether patients passing through the clinic require priority or non-priority treatment,

selecting unused specimen containers with or without priority indicators according to the priority required for the respective patients,

filling the selected priority or non-priority containers with specimens taken from the respective patients, labeling the respective containers, and

sending the filled and labeled containers to a laboratory for testing in accord with their respective labels and priority indicators.

44. (new) An unused specimen container for use in the method of claim 43, having a body with an opening for receipt of a specimen, and a priority indicator on the body which is visible when a lid is in place to close the opening.

45. (new) A container according to claim 44 wherein the priority indicator is a colored band which extends

substantially around the body, adjacent the opening.

46. (new) A container according to claim 44 wherein the priority indicator is integral with a data label.

47. (new) A priority specimen container for use in assessment of patients, having a body with an opening for receipt of a specimen from a patient, a lid which closes the opening, and a priority indicator which is located on the body adjacent the opening.

48. (new) A container according to claim 47 wherein the priority indicator is a colored band which extends substantially around the body.

49. (new) A container according to claim 47 wherein the priority indicator is integral with a data label.

50. (new) A method of processing a specimen from a patient, including:

determining that the patient requires urgent testing of a specimen,

selecting an unused specimen container having a priority indicator on the body of the container,

collecting a specimen from the patient using the selected container, and

sending the container with the specimen to a laboratory for the testing.

51. (new) A method according to claim 50 further including:

registering the priority of the container at the laboratory,

carrying out the urgent testing with priority over specimens in containers not having priority indicators, and

sending an urgent report with results of the testing to a required destination.